

rank of Career Ambassador. Today I have the privilege of honoring Ambassador Crocker with the highest civil award I can bestow, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. [Applause] Okay. It has not been bestowed yet. [Laughter]

The son of an Air Force officer, Ryan Crocker has never been your typical diplomat. For social engagements, he likes to tell guests, “no socks required.” [Laughter] For language training, he once spent time herding sheep with a desert tribe in Jordan. For sport, he has jogged through war zones and run marathons on four continents. And for assignments, his preference has always been anywhere but Washington. [Laughter]

During his nearly four decades in the Foreign Service, Ryan Crocker has become known as America’s Lawrence of Arabia. His career has taken him to every corner of the Middle East. His understanding of the region is unmatched. His exploits are legendary. He has served as ambassador to five countries. He has repeatedly taken on the most challenging assignments.

The man has never run from danger. As a young officer during the late 1970s, Ryan catalogued Saddam Hussein’s murderous rise to power. In 1983, he survived the terrorist attack on the American Embassy in Lebanon. In 1998, as the Ambassador to Syria, he witnessed an angry mob plunder his residence.

After any one of these brushes with danger, most people would have lost their appetite for adventure—not Ryan Crocker. In the years since September the 11th, 2001, I have asked Ryan to hold numerous posts on the frontlines of the war on terror, and he has stepped forward enthusiastically every time.

When the American Embassy in Kabul reopened in the beginning of 2002, Ryan Crocker was our first envoy. When we liberated Iraq and removed the thug Saddam Hussein from power in 2003, I sent Ryan to help lead the reconstruction efforts. When the American Embassy in Pakistan needed new leadership, Ryan Crocker was put in charge. In 2007, I asked Ryan to return for a final mission to Iraq as America’s Ambassador.

Two years later, Iraq is becoming a rising democracy, an ally in the war on terror, an inspiring model of freedom for people across

the Middle East. When the story of this transformation is written, historians will note the extraordinary partnership between two exceptional men: General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker. As the General carried out a surge of military forces to improve security, the Ambassador led a civilian surge to improve everyday life. In December, after months of intense negotiations, the world saw the culmination of Ambassador Crocker’s masterful diplomacy: two historic agreements for long-term cooperation between the United States and Iraq.

This is not the first time that Ambassador Crocker has executed a brilliant diplomatic maneuver in Baghdad. During a rotation at the American Embassy nearly 30 years ago, he persuaded a young Foreign Service officer named Christine Barnes to be his wife. [Laughter] They have traveled the world together, and as Ryan prepares to retire from the Foreign Service, we wish the two of them many years of happiness.

General Petraeus recently said this about his retiring colleague: “It was a great honor for me to be his military wingman.” And today it is my great honor to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom to one of the finest Foreign Service officers in American history, Ryan Clark Crocker. And now the military aide will read the citation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:14 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command, in his former capacity as commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Lt. Cmdr. Clay Beers, USN, Navy Aide to the President. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the U.S. Airways Plane Crash in New York City

January 15, 2009

My administration is coordinating with State and local officials to respond to this afternoon’s plane crash in New York City. We continue to monitor the situation. Laura and I are inspired by the skill and heroism of the flight crew, as well as the dedication

and selflessness of the emergency responders and volunteers who rescued passengers from the icy waters of the Hudson. We send our thoughts and prayers to all involved in the accident.

Proclamation 8339—National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 2009

January 15, 2009

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

All human life is a gift from our Creator that is sacred, unique, and worthy of protection. On National Sanctity of Human Life Day, our country recognizes that each person, including every person waiting to be born, has a special place and purpose in this world. We also underscore our dedication to heeding this message of conscience by speaking up for the weak and voiceless among us.

The most basic duty of government is to protect the life of the innocent. My Administration has been committed to building a culture of life by vigorously promoting adoption and parental notification laws, opposing Federal funding for abortions overseas, encouraging teen abstinence, and funding crisis pregnancy programs. In 2002, I was honored to sign into law the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, which extends legal protection to children who survive an abortion attempt. I signed legislation in 2003 to ban the cruel practice of partial-birth abortion, and that law represents our commitment to building a culture of life in America. Also, I was proud to sign the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004, which allows authorities to charge a person who causes death or injury to a child in the womb with a separate offense in addition to any charges relating to the mother.

America is a caring Nation, and our values should guide us as we harness the gifts of science. In our zeal for new treatments and cures, we must never abandon our fundamental morals. We can achieve the great breakthroughs we all seek with reverence for the gift of life.

The sanctity of life is written in the hearts of all men and women. On this day and

throughout the year, we aspire to build a society in which every child is welcome in life and protected in law. We also encourage more of our fellow Americans to join our just and noble cause. History tells us that with a cause rooted in our deepest principles and appealing to the best instincts of our citizens, we will prevail.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 18, 2009, as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. I call upon all Americans to recognize this day with appropriate ceremonies and to underscore our commitment to respecting and protecting the life and dignity of every human being.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:15 a.m., January 16, 2009]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on January 21.

Memorandum on Limited Waiver of Certain Sanctions Imposed by, and Delegation of Certain Authorities Pursuant to, the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2008

January 15, 2009

Presidential Determination No. 2009–11

Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury

Subject: Limited Waiver of Certain Sanctions Imposed by, and Delegation of Certain Authorities Pursuant to, the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2008

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United